

Price Of Courage

BARBARA SHELLHOUSE

This is a narrative of the years snatched from a man's life, a young man, a writer. Ramon Larue was his name.

It was the dismal period preceding the French Revolution. To you, to whom I write, the name Ramon Larue means nothing; but to those of whom I write, it meant a handsome young man of twenty-five and a broken old man of thirty-five. A man whose name was never spoken, for to those known to have connections with him came mysterious death, or disappearance.

Ramon was a brilliant young writer. His works were meeting with enthusiasm and success the wide world over. He was an important figure in that chronicle of France, and his rising career was being watched carefully by literary men of all lands.

However, Ramon had one weakness, one fault. He admired the republican form of government. He had the mistaken idea that the common people should have some voice in the way they were governed, in the taxes they were assessed, in the wars they fought, in the legislation that was passed, and in the punishment given for breaking this legislation; that the plebeian should have a taste of wine and white cakes, fine carriages and palaces, and the nobleman of black moldy bread and tainted water. That the nobleman should know the feeling of blistering cobblestones on bare feet, and the stench of rat-hole dwellings. Moreover, in his writings he lauded the efforts and the victory of the tiny colonies in the New World against Great Britain, and he urged the Frenchmen to take up arms and to fight for their rights.

For this it was decided that he was to

be done away with. He was struck down, late one night, while returning from a secret meeting of the patriots; and his next ten years were spent entombed in the dreaded Bastille. A tiny cell, cold and slimy and dark, was his home. And spineless, creeping, crawling creatures were his bed-mates.

The Bastille was a huge forbidding vault of gray stones, connected by underground passages to the Royal Palace of the French kings. There were towers and underground dungeons where the prisoners were kept. Here were hundreds of lifeless bodies, men without souls. Through the dozens of winding corridors, each lined with forgotten men, echoed the cries of anguish, and screamed the tortured thoughts of human beings both living and dead.

Here Ramon existed through the years. Though not subjected to actual physical torture himself, his cell was directly across from the torture chamber, and he was obliged to see and hear such sights as: the gallows where men were dropped through trap-doors so shallow that their necks weren't broken and they just dangled there, strangling slowly; or the pulley by which men were lifted from the ground by their ankles and dropped down in sharp jerks for hours; or when a body was branded with hot irons, he saw them heat the irons in a little stove within a few feet of where the victim lay strapped on a table; or where naked victims were hoisted by the heels to the ceiling then dropped two feet at a time. This lasted two or three hours, up and down, until their heads swelled like balloons and blood ran out of the ears, mouths and noses.

Ramon was a man of delicate and sensitive nature, and for this reason it did not take long to subdue any sense of resistance he might have had left.

Eventually, the Bastille doors opened for Ramon, a broken, tired old man at the age of thirty-five. He told his story in the hope that someone would record it and

use it to arouse France to rid herself of these injustices. Someone did publish the story, causing the explosion that set off the French Revolution. Ramon Larue, however, died before the people of France succeeded in destroying this stronghold of tyranny.

Profile Of A Nation

DONALD H. EMRICK

Behind every face lies a story. Behind the profile of Abraham Lincoln dwelled the soulstirring drama of a fledging nation—its tribulations, its triumphs. Every stroke of the artist in painting the President depicted character, hope, life.

Surrounded by intrigue, plot, and bloodshed, a simple intrepid nation was personified in the high stalwart forehead of the Emancipator. Sterling character in bold relief engendered in the heartwarming phrase, "Honest Abe." A heavy brow carried the hopes, the sorrows, shared the gains and the losses of an ill people, and fostered the cherished principle of freedom for all.

The Almighty Sculptor in his own good way had chanced to bestow a nose of generous proportions upon the lanky cir-

suit rider — a nose hinting of homey background, envisioning the crude midwestern courtroom, the mellow atmosphere of corn-cob pipe philosophy. It even suggested humility and simplicity evident in the crude candle-lit cabin of younger days.

Hard lean years had tempered, under-standing had mellowed a mouth of full dimensions, overly large yet sensitive in form. Pain. . . Pain of a nation locked in mortal combat, shaded the smile. Justice and truth spoke forth boldly in every line of the generous lips: "With malice toward none, with charity for all . . ."

Weary yet alert, a living prophecy of a government "of the people, by the people and for the people," Lincoln's profile was a profile of the rising Nation, that "shall not perish from this earth."

